LIST OF CURRENT CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for stretching a weft thread inserted into a weaving shed of a weaving machine, for example an air-jet weaving machine, comprising a thread clamp disposed on that side of the weaving shed opposite the insertion side actuatable by means of a control unit for clamping the inserted ~~arranged to clamp the~~ weft thread, and further comprising upstream of said clamp ~~which~~, relative to the weft thread transporting direction and on the same side of the shed as said clamp, a deflecting device ~~is provided~~ actuatable by said control unit for deflecting the weft thread, said thread clamp and said deflecting device being separately actuatable, such that said thread clamp prevents an inserted weft thread from snapping back into the shed.

2. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the thread clamp and the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread are disposed next to each other.

3. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1 including at least one weft thread motion detecting device, wherein a signal generated by said weft thread motion detecting device is converted into actuation signals for the thread clamp and the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread.

4. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 3, including a prewinder weft motion detector that comprises the weft thread motion detecting device, said prewinder weft motion detector arranged to detect the number of windings of the weft thread drawn off from a prewinder by each weft insertion.

5. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the magnitude of a deflection force exerted by the device for deflecting the weft thread is adjustable, controllable or regulatable.

6. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the course of the deflection force exerted by the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread is adjustable or regulatable.

7. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein two or more deflecting devices for deflecting the weft thread are provided between a weft thread stopper and the thread clamp.

8. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, including at least two deflecting devices for deflecting the weft thread that are actuatable independently of each other.

9. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the beginning and/or the end of the actuation of the thread clamp is variable.

10. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the beginning and/or the end of the actuation of the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread is variable.

11. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the thread clamp and the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread are disposed on a sley of the weaving machine.

12. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 11, wherein the sley carries a reed having a weft guide duct, and the thread clamp and the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread are disposed along an extension of said weft guide duct.

13. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 12, wherein the elements of the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread and elements comprising the thread clamp are disposed, in their at-rest position, outside the boundary of the weft thread transport duct.

14. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread comprises, as its actuating device, at least one pneumatic piston-cylinder unit.

15. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein a piston of the piston-cylinder unit is drivable in both directions with compressed air.

16. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 14, including a device for detecting the position of the piston of the piston-cylinder unit of the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread.

17. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 14, including means that determine the level of the pressure and/or the variation over time of the pressure that is delivered to the piston-cylinder unit of the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread.

18. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 14, wherein the piston-cylinder unit of the deflecting device for deflecting the weft thread is connectable selectively via a switching valve to at least two delivery lines for compressed air.

19. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, including a pneumatic piston-cylinder unit comprising the actuating device for the thread clamp.

20. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 19, wherein a piston of the piston-cylinder unit is drivable with compressed air in both directions.

21. (Currently Amended) A method for stretching a weft thread after its insertion into a weaving shed of a weaving machine, for example an air-jet weaving machine, comprising clamping the weft thread at least approximately at the end of the insertion on the side of the shed opposite the insertion side and tensioning the clamped weft thread ~~maintaining the inserted weft thread in tension~~ by deflection of the weft thread at the side of the shed opposite the insertion side until it is beaten up.

22. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 21, including deflecting the weft thread with a force whose magnitude is controllable or regulatable.

23. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 21, including deflecting the weft thread at a plurality of locations.

24. (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 1, including a thread brake on the weft insertion side of the weaving shed.

25. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 21, wherein the step of maintaining the inserted weft thread in tension by deflection of the weft thread is carried out on the side of the shed opposite the insertion side.